

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

February 24, 2016

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Meeting Date: February 24, 2016

Called to Order: 5:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Fred Bowman, and Patricia Pruitt. Greg Garrison and Chris Menegoni were absent.

Selectmen Present: Michael Nelson and Rich Kuklewicz. Chris Boutwell was absent.

Others Present: Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen and DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron

Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 17, 2016.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 17, 2016.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Capital Improvements Committee

DPW Requests:

Discretionary Fund - \$100,000

- Need \$79,773 to restore balance to \$100,000.
- Mr. Hanold asked if Mr. Bergeron has any specific needs. Mr. Bergeron is not expecting any major purchases in the near future. This year he's looking at \$20,000 for a sign machine, and needs to replace a 2001 small dump truck. If the new groundskeepers are approved, some money will be used for a small tractor with a backhoe to assist in planting trees.
- Pickups run over \$45,000 because they are equipped with plows.
- Mr. Naughton asked if there was any plan to come up with an equipment list with planned replacements. Mr. Bergeron has a plan and will provide it when it's been updated.
- Mr. Hanold asked how much Mr. Bergeron really needs. Mr. Bergeron is concerned that if the amount is reduced, it will never be increased again. The account is also used for large and unexpected repairs, which can not be planned.

Final Lease Payment - \$43,325 – This is the last payment for a 6 wheel dump truck.

Inspect, Clean, Line Sewer Lines- \$385,000

- This is the continuation of a program started last year.
- Mr. Hanold asked if, given the cost of the main drain siphon, it would make sense to postpone funding this project for one year. Mr. Bergeron agreed that the storm drain and siphon issue takes priority.

- Mr. Bergeron's agreed that the worst areas have been taken care of. His goal is to have all of the Transite (asbestos-cement) sewer lines re-lined.
- The workers have also found a few missing manholes as a result of this project.

Storm Drain & Siphon Repair – cost unknown at this time.

- Mr. Bergeron reiterated that Mr. Trombley would like to have some of the major drain and siphon repair to be funded from taxation.
- Mr. Kuklewicz recommended a maintenance plan for these things. Mr. Bergeron agreed that this would be to our advantage.

DPW Staffing Request - Mr. Naughton noted that the DPW asked for 3 new employees and asked if it would work to get one groundskeeper and one building maintenance person. This would still make Mr. Bergeron very happy. Regarding the request for groundskeepers, Mr. Bergeron's plan was to have 2 mowing and 2 in the bucket truck trimming trees.

WPCF Requests

Thickened Sludge Storage/Receiving Tank - \$792,026

- This is a placeholder amount for a 9,000 gallon storage tank.
- Debt service would be raised from the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.
- Large tank trucks may be used for storage in place of building new storage tanks. This would provide a test period for this project for the first year or two.
- Increasing the storage capacity would increase the revenues accordingly.
- Mr. Kuklewicz thinks the project should be reviewed in light of return on investment.
- CIC will be meeting with the WPCF for updated cost estimates.

Primary Sludge Pumps - \$100,000

- This would upgrade and/or replace primary sludge pumps and equipment.
- Cost to be raised from the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund.

Appropriation to WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund - \$200,000

- This would be funded from net revenues from the thickened sludge project.
- Mr. Kuklewicz noted that revenues from previous years have been rolled into supporting the operating budget, and using of all the net revenues towards funding the Capital Stabilization Fund could have a substantial impact on sewer rates.

GMRSD Requests

Classrooms and a music room in the stage area at Hillcrest Elementary School - \$70,000

- New classrooms would be used for special needs students and meeting with parents.
- Class size is limited by regulations. The district does not currently have enough classrooms.
- The so called music room could be used for other needs.
- This amount is a placeholder until better estimates are obtained.

- The costs include adding ramps for access to the stage and classrooms.
- A small stage area will remain.
- These classrooms are a priority for the district.
- It was suggested that the GMRSD could apply to the FCTS to have FCTS students build the classrooms.

New Parking Lot at Hillcrest - \$50,000

- The present parking lot is not large enough to handle the number of cars that use the driveway and parking lot.
- This project would add 15-20 parking spaces and ease traffic congestion. There's currently a lot of circling around and parking on lawn areas.
- Mr. Kuklewicz asked if the DPW could install the parking lot. Mr. Bergeron said that Town employees could do some of the work, but it would take away from regular work planned. A contractor would be a better idea. Mr. Kuklewicz asked if it would be better for the DPW to oversee the project. Mr. Bergeron agreed.
- Mr. Bergeron noted that the current parking lot and driveway areas were originally planned for students being dropped off. The issue is that parents now walk their children into the building, which requires a place to park.
- Mr. Naughton asked if this has been a matter of deterioration of the existing parking area. It's more an issue of increased use.
- Mr. Bergeron thinks that the \$50,000 might not even pay for the blacktop. Noted that the school will probably also want another exit.
- Mr. Hanold questioned how important this is. Mr. Bergeron doesn't know if it gets much use other than certain times of day.

Removal of Oil Tanks - \$600,000 placeholder

- State regulations require the removal and replacement of certain oil tanks at the town owned school buildings by August 2017.
- More information is needed on this project.
- Mr. Bowman asked Mr. Bergeron if the town had any similar underground tanks. The town has none.
- A major cost issue is whether you just remove intact tanks, remove leaking tanks, or remove and replace tanks. It is not immediately clear how many of the involved tanks are currently in active use.

Planning Department Requests

DPW Facility - \$5,500,000

- This amount is a placeholder for the new DPW facility that is being planned by a separate building committee.

Strathmore Abatement - \$702,027

- The property needs to be abated before additional work can be done on the mill complex.

Strathmore Demolition Plan - \$40,000

- A well studied plan will give the Town better cost estimates and guidance for the next phase of this complex, including which buildings to demolish and in what order.

Purchase Industrial Park Property - \$132,000

- This would buy back a 7.9 acre parcel from a company that did not meet the agreement with the Town for development.
- This expense would be funded from Sale of Town Property.

Police Department Requests

Police Detective Vehicle - \$25,000

- This request is for an unmarked vehicle for use by detectives.

Police Radio Tower Upgrades - \$50,000

- There are many dead radio spots in Montague.
- This amount is a placeholder.
- The Chief may be able to get help from FRCOG and others.
- More information will be forthcoming.

Accountant Budget/Backup person

- Ms. Olsen noted that she's been through 5 people acting as her backup since the Assistant Town Accountant position was eliminated. 2 people did not work out and 3 either retired or moved on to other jobs.
- Ms. Olsen finds the time and effort spent on training to be very excessive when compared to the modest benefit, and noted that she invariably had to spend time fixing things done in her absence.
- Ms. Olsen would prefer to just come in for a half a day on her vacation weeks and do payroll and bills. Ms. Olsen noted that she hasn't used any sick leave in 10 years, and while there's no guarantee that she'll never use any again, there are very explicit directions if she's incapacitated.
- Eliminating this cost will save over \$3,000 for Fiscal Year 2017.
- It was agreed that Ms. Olsen will adjust her budget, but this should be revisited regularly.

Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements

Mr. Naughton noted that the FCTS is scheduled to meet with us on March 9th, but that's the night they are voting on their budget. It was suggested that we meet with the FCTS next week before our meeting with the GMRSD. Ms. Olsen is to find out if the FCTS is able to meet with us at 5:30 PM on March 2nd. (note: they cannot meet at 5:30, but will come later that evening)

Next Meeting:

- March 2nd – GMRSD, FCTS

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- March 9th – FCTS, Final Vote Schedules I & II
- March 16th – Town Administrator's budget recommendations, Use of Reserves
- March 23rd – Final meeting with CIC, Presentation from Mr. Nelson about town-wide building needs.
- March 30th – Vote all appropriations and funding sources,
- April 6th – Draft Finance Committee Report, revenue estimate changes (if any), STM items, if any
- April 13th – Finalize Finance Committee Report and policy actions
- April 20th - Last chance for changes, approve Finance Committee Report

Future Items:

- Discuss how to handle process for the appropriation for WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund, use of revenues from solid waste process.
- Financial Policy regarding annual appropriations to Town General Stabilization Fund/OPEB Trust Fund
- Revisit and rework affordable assessment concept to include both school districts.
- Still waiting on resolution (if any) on staffing to do minutes for various boards and committees- asked about by Mr. Golrick.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Minutes of February 17th
- CIC preliminary report